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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/08/2024
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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA RECONSIDERS REJECTION OF GUANTANAMO
DETAINEES

Classified By: CDA Chris Hoh. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Two sources in recent weeks have reported that the GoA is reconsidering its rejection of Guantanamo detainees for resettlement. In a July 2 meeting with Charge, Bernhard Wrabetz Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chancellor, reported that the GoA was taking another look at its position. He pleaded for extreme discretion in handling the news, as a change of position would be both embarrassing and extremely unpopular. On July 8, Elizabeth Grossmann a Social Democratic member of parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, told Econ/Pol Counselor that the Foreign Ministry had briefed the Committee on the reconsideration. She said that the problem of Guantanamo detainees, was one which required a concrete signal of support for the Obama Administration.

12. (C) Comment. Embassy has made known at all levels of government, and to other elite contacts, USG unhappiness at the GoA's early and total rejection of resettlement in Austria. Many foreign policy experts acknowledged their own disagreement with the GoA stance, which they attributed to domestic concern about rising crime and fear of Islamism. Several commentaries in the "quality" press also took issue with the Government's position. It appears Austria's relative isolation within the EU, the pressure from opinion leaders, and the knowledge of U.S. unhappiness have combined to at least re-open the issue within the GoA. End Comment.
HOH